

PLAYBOY ENTERPRISES, INC.

December 10, 1974

Dear Mr. Ellsberg:

It is my pleasure to send you an advance reprint of THE PLAYBOY INTERVIEW WITH JOHN DEAN which appears in the January 1975 issue of PLAYBOY.

I feel that this interview might be of special interest to you. If you care to comment on it, the Editors of PLAYBOY would be pleased to consider your letter for publication, and we'd be most appreciative if, when possible, you could limit your response to 250 words.

Cordially,



John Blumenthal
Assistant Editor

JB:mr
Encl.

JOHN DEAN

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

a candid conversation with the man who blew the whistle on richard nixon

When he was a boy, he had been caught at some mischief and tried to worm his way out of it. "You're cornered, son," his father said, "and when you're cornered, there's only one way out: Tell the truth." That made sense to John Wesley Dean III, and some 30 years later—trapped this time in a web of intrigue he had helped weave around the White House—it still did. In March of 1973, Dean decided to tell everything he knew—or at least everything he had to—about the spreading scandal that had come to be known as Watergate. He knew plenty.

That June, with encyclopedic recall, the 36-year-old former Presidential counsel testified for five days before the Ervin committee—and an estimated 80,000,000 television viewers—about the political paranoia and ethical pragmatism that had led to the creation of a covert White House intelligence operation—the "plumbers"—that had not only committed the original break-in at the Democrats' Watergate headquarters and the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office but also laid plans to activate fire bombers, mugging squads, kidnaping teams and prostitution rings for the purpose of sabotaging the political opposition.

Dean also told about a far-reaching conspiracy to cover up these crimes—a

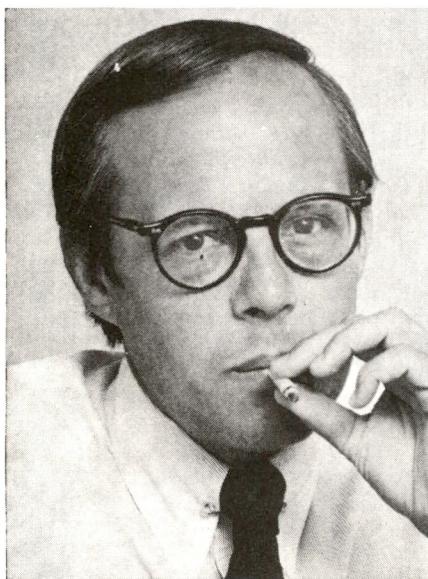
conspiracy that involved blackmail, hush money, perjury, destruction of evidence, even a death threat directed at White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder by G. Gordon Liddy, mercurial leader of the plumbers. Dean testified that the cover-up, which had involved nearly every high-ranking member of the White House staff, had been orchestrated by Presidential lieutenants H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman with—and this was Dean's biggest bombshell—the express knowledge and consent of the President himself. Dean also confessed that his own transgressions included making a clemency offer to Watergate burglar James McCord in exchange for his silence, coaching Magruder about how to lie on the stand and attempting to spirit E. Howard Hunt, another of the Watergate break-in team, out of the country. He did not then admit, as he was later forced to do, that he had also tossed two of Hunt's notebooks, containing incriminating evidence, into a White House shredder.

At his subsequent trial, however, Dean pleaded guilty only to one charge—conspiring to obstruct justice by hiding the truth about the Watergate operation—a deal worked out with former Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox in exchange for his cooperation as a witness. Dean sought to lighten his sentence further by emphasizing the role he said he had

played—eventually corroborated by the White House tapes—in trying to end the cover-up. But he understressed his role—also confirmed by the tapes—as an efficient executor of, even a cheerleader for, the Administration's repressive policies. And on September 3, 1974, Dean exchanged his Brooks Brothers suit for prison denims and began to serve the one-to-four-year term to which he had been sentenced by Chief U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica.

It was a stunning end for one of the strangest success stories in American political history. Son of a prosperous Pennsylvania corporation vice-president, Dean had begun his career correctly, if inauspiciously, with a four-year stint at Virginia's ramrod-straight Staunton Military Academy, where he roomed with Barry Goldwater, Jr. (still a close friend). At Wooster College in Ohio, Dean was only a C student majoring in political science, but he became known around campus as a coolly aggressive and relentless debater. He didn't make many friends, but his roommate recalls that Dean would sometimes accept five dollars or so—though he didn't need it—to write themes for other students and that he always delivered the grade they requested.

During a semester away from Wooster at American University in Washington, D.C., Dean met Karla Hennings, the



VERNON L. SMITH

"I tried to give President Nixon good advice, but I didn't have the courage to tell him, 'You're dead wrong.' Rather, I told him, 'If you want me to go out and sell Wheaties, I'll sell Wheaties.'"

"I think the decision not to prosecute Nixon will influence his role in history. There's also the question of whether or not there will be further revelations involving him. I believe there will be. Big ones."

"The severity of my sentence surprised me. I had never perjured myself, I had not been involved in planning the cover-up and the record is clear that, in my own way, I had tried to stop it."

blonde daughter of Missouri's Democratic Senator Tom Hennings. After his graduation from Wooster in 1961, they got married, and Dean enrolled at Georgetown Law School, where a fellow student recalls that "he always looked like he'd just stepped out of the shower, even after a four-hour exam." And as a young attorney in 1965, Dean had no trouble landing a \$7500-a-year job with Welch and Morgan, a Washington firm that specialized in communications law, mostly in procuring TV licenses for its clients. Six months later, however, Dean was summarily fired after an angry dispute with the firm's senior partner, who charged him with unethical conduct involving a conflict of interest. An associate at Welch and Morgan remembers Dean as "a very ambitious guy . . . had political connections. Well, you marry a Senator's daughter, you're bound to get a job on the Hill."

How right he was. Within two months, despite the circumstances of his departure from the law firm, Dean was hired as chief minority counsel on the House Judiciary Committee. After a year on the \$7800 job, Dean left to become associate director of the National Commission for the Reform of Federal Criminal Law—at \$25,000 a year. Moonlighting with other Republican lawyers on Capitol Hill, he helped write the crime-related position papers used by Nixon in his 1968 law-and-order campaign and was rewarded after the election with an appointment as Associate Deputy Attorney General under John Mitchell.

In the course of his duties, Dean conferred often with Nixon speechwriter Pat Buchanan and with Egil Krogh, chief lieutenant of White House third-in-command John Ehrlichman, who was favorably impressed with his ability and malleability, and in June of 1970, he was invited to join the White House staff as chief counsel—at \$37,500. He accepted on the spot.

All went well for a while, although Dean, with his Ivy League wardrobe, his maroon Porsche, his taste for wine and his busy social life (he had quietly divorced Karla before going to the White House), wasn't exactly in synch with the white-socks-and-cottage-cheese style of the Nixon White House staff. On a personal level, he and the imperious Ehrlichman nurtured a cordial dislike for each other; but he claims to have worked well—and become close friends—with the even more imperious Haldeman. This amicability began to deteriorate early in 1972, however, as Dean was drawn increasingly away from his legal responsibilities into closed-door sessions with Mitchell—chief law-enforcement officer of the United States—and seamy characters such as Hunt, Liddy and Special Counsel Charles Colson about million-dollar plans for campaign "dirty

tricks." One of the covert operations approved at a subsequent meeting was carried out on the night of June 17, 1972: a mission headed by Hunt and Liddy to break into and bug the Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate. As the world knows by now, a piece of tape left carelessly on a door led to their arrest, precipitating a chain reaction that finally engulfed the Administration in the biggest political scandal in American history.

As each fresh revelation shoved the blame closer to the Oval Office, Dean was dragged deeper into what he finally told Nixon were "indictable" acts that wouldn't stop this "cancer on the Presidency" from spreading. But his warnings were ignored. Eventually, Dean could take no more, and resolved to cure the cancer—or at least to save himself from being consumed by it—by telling the truth.

What he did choose to tell he recited in awesome and appalling detail, and while the backlash branded him a liar and a turncoat, the White House concocted a position paper charging Dean with masterminding not only the cover-up but also the conspiracy itself. And when that wouldn't play, it tried floating a rumor that he'd cheated on his new wife, Maureen. As explosive as his testimony was, it was still Dean's word against that of the President of the United States, and the doubts lingered among diehards until the release of the first tape transcripts confirmed Dean's version of events—and effectively put the lie to Nixon's.

By the time the "smoking-gun" tape collapsed the President's last line of defense, forcing him to resign, Dean had been convicted and was about to go to prison. Having witnessed at last the death scene of an epic drama he had helped write, did he think he had finally won, or that Nixon had lost? What, if anything, had he—and we—learned from what President Ford had called "our long national nightmare"? For the answers to these and other questions, we sent Los Angeles journalist and broadcaster Barbara Cady to interview Dean a few days before his prison term began. (When President Ford pardoned Nixon, a couple of questions dealing with that topic were sent to Dean and answered—in writing, due to prison regulations—a few weeks after this interview took place.) Here is Cady's report:

"People magazine had used the word cheeriness to describe John Dean's hilltop home in Beverly Hills, but I found it more of a sunny fortress with all the charm and warmth of Peenemuende, Wernher von Braun's World War Two rocket bunker. Two U.S. Marshals, looking like well-dressed bouncers, stared sullenly down through wrap-around sunglasses from a second-story picture window in the guest house nearby. Hurrying

out the front door, Dean greeted me and, looking briefly up over his shoulder at his guardians, led me inside.

"Decorated in California-Georgetown with comfortable earth-toned furnishings, the living room told a good deal about Dean's quick move to Los Angeles. The tall bookshelves were sparsely filled with expensive art books and current best sellers; unhung pictures stood leaning against two walls; personal mementos were conspicuously absent.

"As I was setting up my tape recorder, Mo Dean came into the room briefly to greet me and tell her husband about her afternoon shopping plans. She kissed him goodbye and left. Dean then settled himself on one of the two long couches that faced each other in the center of the room. In the language of the Fifties, he looked sharp. In his V-neck cashmere sweater, button-down oxford shirt, razor-creased slacks and polished black loafers, with his owl-like tortoise-rimmed glasses and neatly parted short brown hair, he was an Ivy League Wally Cox.

"It was easy to see how Haldeman and Ehrlichman could have underestimated Dean. As a friend had cruelly put it, he was only a 'pilot fish' that swam around the sharks. But for all his Town and Country Eastern breeding, there was something of the shark about him, too. Despite his disavowals, Dean had been very much one of 'the boys in the Bund,' as someone had called the White House senior staff, if only in the sense that his ethics seemed governed not by what was right but by what worked. In telling me, before I turned on the tape recorder, that he felt there was no difference between Republicans and Democrats, Dean was telling me that he worked for Nixon less because he admired him or his policies than because he was the President. Subsequent events also made it clear that he worked less for the President than he did for himself.

"Often smiling wryly, Dean refused to answer many of my questions that dealt specifically with Watergate matters still in litigation. It was impossible for me to coax him from his gag-rule stance, but frequently, as he talked around certain questions, eluded those that he would be compelled to answer at the cover-up trial and dropped coy hints of 'more to come,' details surfaced, personalities emerged—most of all, and perhaps unintentionally, his own. Until now, the dimensions of Watergate had been defined almost entirely in terms of tapes, transcripts, affidavits, testimony. In breaking his silence, if only to speak so warily, Dean has added at least a footnote—or perhaps it's only a preamble—to the story of his own place in history."

PLAYBOY: Your fall from Government was as meteoric as your rise within it. Do you have the bends?

DEAN: All I can say is that this has been an amazing education for me. It would

take a week to tell you everything I've learned—especially about myself. Since we're starting this interview now, and in a week I'll be in prison, let me say simply that this has been the most maturing experience of my life. There's a kind of sobering irony, for example, in the fact that my Government career ended where it began, before the House Judiciary Committee. After a very short stint in private practice, I became chief minority counsel for that committee, and it was before it, on the other side of the desk, that I appeared as a witness in the impeachment inquiry against the President of the United States. It's mind-blowing when you think about it.

PLAYBOY: Another irony is the fact that your departure from Government resulted in your emergence, in the wake of the Ervin committee hearings, as a kind of media star. Has this strange new status disrupted your life in any way?

DEAN: Well, it's become a fish-bowl existence. There's nowhere I go—airports, restaurants, supermarkets—that I'm not recognized, even when I'm wearing dark glasses. I suppose it's not surprising, though, considering the fact that I was seen on television all day every day for five days in June 1973 by around 80,000,000 people.

PLAYBOY: What's the general reaction of the people who recognize you? Do you sense much hostility?

DEAN: Not at all. I guess if people feel it, they're ashamed to show it to my face. What I do get are double takes, you know, and the whispering, and the pointing. But no one has ever come up and spoken to me without saying something nice, and that's been delightful, as well as a great relief.

PLAYBOY: How about your mail?

DEAN: The mail has continued to be voluminous; in fact, it's out of hand. Most people write to say thank you. And they use the word courage a lot. I hope to thank them all someday for their kind words of support.

PLAYBOY: What do they thank you for?

DEAN: For telling them what was going on.

PLAYBOY: And the rest of the letters?

DEAN: Maybe one or two out of every 100 calls me Aaron Burr, turncoat, fink. Those are the ones that aren't signed.

PLAYBOY: Have you received any threats?

DEAN: There have been threats from time to time from various official channels, as well as through the mail.

PLAYBOY: What kind of official channels?

DEAN: I'm afraid I can't be more specific. But they were serious enough so that the Special Prosecutor, Archibald Cox, thought I ought to have protection when I testified before the Senate. Protection was periodic during the summer after my testimony, and then it resumed again full time shortly after the first of 1974. I've had a U. S. Marshal with me 24 hours a day since then, so there's been a total

loss of freedom. I only wish I'd received "good time" off my sentence for the loss of freedom this protective custody imposed on our lives.

PLAYBOY: If the public in general seems not to bear you any malice, what about the people who were your pre-Watergate friends? Have you lost any?

DEAN: Not any real ones.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about some of the other members of the White House staff—men you used to work with—who have since turned on you?

DEAN: For some reason, I feel no bitterness toward them. Surprise, disappointment, but no bitterness.

PLAYBOY: No sense of personal betrayal?

DEAN: Someday I'll have a lot of things to say about them that they won't want said. But I won't do it out of bitterness. I'll do it simply to tell what happened, for the sake of making the historical record accurate and complete. All the chapters of this story haven't been written yet, though. Not by any means. Maybe my own feelings will change; I don't know.

PLAYBOY: What guilt do you feel about the role you, along with the others, played in the Watergate conspiracy?

DEAN: I feel guilt about having misused my office to obstruct justice. The office itself now appears to me in a far different light than it did when I was a staff member with a fancy title. If the key White House tapes are ever made public, they will show that I was an agent rather than a principal in the conspiracy, but there's no question that I participated in the cover-up. The most haunting guilt I feel, however, is for taking so long to muster my own internal fortitude, to stand up and say, "I can't go any further."

PLAYBOY: At the time the cover-up policy was begun, weren't you disturbed about having to help carry it out?

DEAN: Yes, that did bother me in many ways. There were times after the 1972 election when I was incapable of doing my work; I would just sit brooding about it. The nights were very tough at home; I drank too much, and I had trouble sleeping. But when I became aware of what had happened, I could see the pieces falling together, and I just couldn't perceive of any alternative to covering up. There was virtually nobody I could talk to without getting him involved, and I didn't want to do that.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you ever find anybody to confide in?

DEAN: Once—early on—I talked to then-Attorney General Dick Kleindienst in his office and told him as a friend that I was scared to death because I just didn't know what this meant for the country. Today he denies that happened, but I guess he has to. In any case, I was frightened because I thought it could go all the way to

the top, to the President. It could shatter the image of the Presidency, affect all our relationships with foreign countries, change the course of history. But the President was busy trying to wind down the war in Vietnam, and that seemed to be more important than anything else; I believed that nothing should be allowed to jeopardize that overriding mission.

My God, with a weakened President, what would happen if the Russians misjudged the country? I used to lie awake nights with terrible thoughts like this. What could I do? Finally, after months of involvement, I decided to go to the prosecutors and tell them about my own role. When the questioning got into Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, it bothered me very much because of Haldeman's importance to the way the President worked. Haldeman wasn't merely an efficient manager of the staff: He was also the President's sounding board on everything from our policy in Vietnam to the economy. I asked myself how I could tell the truth and cause the least damage. In my testimony before the Ervin committee, I preceded my prepared statement by saying that it was far easier for me to talk about myself than to talk about others, and that it especially hurt me to talk about the Presidency.

PLAYBOY: Whomever you had to implicate in your testimony, many people are convinced that you confessed only in order to save your neck, because you were certain you'd be exposed anyway.

DEAN: It wasn't only the impossibility of continuing. I just couldn't live doing what I was doing, and finally I had to do something about it. It was the toughest decision I'll probably ever face in my life.

PLAYBOY: Did you seek immunity from prosecution when you went to the Special Prosecutor's office?

DEAN: When I hired Charlie Shaffer to be my lawyer, I told him I was prepared to step forward. Charlie said, "You don't have to run into machine guns to get the truth out, and if you want me as your lawyer, then let me do what's necessary. You should be a witness, not a defendant." Later on, Sam Dash, the Senate Watergate Committee's majority counsel, told me he'd like me to have immunity before the committee. I told Sam that I was prepared to testify with immunity or without it. Sam knew that all along.

PLAYBOY: Did you go to the prosecutors before or after the cover-up started to come unglued?

DEAN: Before. My lawyer first visited the Prosecutor on April 2, 1973. The cover-up didn't really start coming apart until mid-April; that's when they learned I had gone to the prosecutors early in the month and had already had sessions with them implicating Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

PLAYBOY: But did you think, from what you knew as one of its supervisors, that

there were simply too many people involved in the cover-up, that the truth was going to come out anyway?

DEAN: I wasn't sure. But I knew it was possible to continue the cover-up. After McCord released his letter to Judge Sirica in March, there was a scurry of telephone calls around the White House. Our assessment was that none of us would be touched—that McCord would have been standing out there alone with his letter saying that higher-ups were involved. There was that much insulation. The White House could not have been seriously hurt by the re-election committee if everybody had agreed to be less than truthful. However, by this time, in late March 1973, I had finally decided that I couldn't continue to go along with that.

PLAYBOY: Weren't you awed by the thought of the vast repercussions your decision was bound to have?

DEAN: Very much so. Also, it's never fun to be a tattletale. And, as I said, it was particularly unpleasant for me to have to tarnish the office of the President in public. But I had reached the conclusion that while it might be a little painful for me and my family, we were very small in a very large picture, and I felt I could be a catalyst for resolving it all.

PLAYBOY: Was your week of testimony as anguishing as you'd anticipated?

DEAN: I was tense, of course, but the real anguish had ended for me when I decided to tell what I knew. It's easy when you're telling the truth. So what I felt mainly was a deep sense of relief. There were a few unexpected strains, however. After my committee appearances each day, I'd go home and a lot of friends would come over and want to turn the television on and watch my testimony with me. That was something I just couldn't do. Once was enough. I was very familiar with what I'd said, and I really didn't want to hear it again.

And the appearances were physically exhausting. You'll notice that in all the pictures of my Ervin committee testimony, I'm always leaning forward. On the first day, Dash asked me to pull the mike toward me, but I couldn't, because the wire was too short. So I had to lean forward in order to be heard. Later witnesses had a longer wire, but I had to sit there the entire week bending forward, and by the end of the day, my back and neck were wrecked. When I got home at night I'd have to get them massaged. How's that for an excuse to get your wife to give you a back rub? Plus there was the strain of answering those questions. And you've got to sit down sometime and read aloud for six hours at a stretch to see what it does to your throat.

Well, finally Friday came, and they wanted me to finish my testimony that day, because other witnesses were scheduled

for the following week. I had been drinking water all day because of my throat, and by late afternoon, I had to go to the bathroom so badly I was about ready to explode. So I asked my lawyer to get a signal to Dash that I had to take a break. But Charlie said, "If you interrupt this now, you're going to be back here on Monday." So they're getting ready for their final round of questions and Gurney and Thompson are ready to throw their last bombs at me. And I'm sitting there in almost unbearable pain—but still drinking water for my throat. By the end of this last afternoon's session, my hands were starting to tremble. One or two newsmen picked that up and thought the Senators had hit on some sensitive area of questioning that had really rattled me. What was rattling me, of course, was that my back teeth were floating. But I didn't want to begin another week, so I just sat there until it was through. You can't believe how quickly I made it out of that room and around the corner to the john.

PLAYBOY: You've been quoted as saying that Senator Weicker's "fishing" questions in the course of your testimony before the Ervin committee extracted certain things from you that you wouldn't have said otherwise, and that there were other things that the committee could have found out if it had asked. Have these things since come out?

DEAN: Some. But some are not totally relevant to any of the criminal investigations still going on. There will be a time, however, when I'll sit down and reconstruct my years at the White House and they'll be a part of that.

PLAYBOY: Would it be premature for this sort of thing to be made public now?

DEAN: I think it would be at the time of this interview, because it could adversely affect the reputations of those currently under indictment and might influence the outcome of their trials.

PLAYBOY: But shouldn't the public know the facts?

DEAN: Yes, and I think I have a duty to history to explain these things. I plan to do it someday, but not now. I've already had a very handsome book contract offered to me, but I turned it down at the request of the Special Prosecutor's office.

PLAYBOY: Well, can you tell us if you've testified to everything you know about Nixon's involvement in Watergate and the cover-up?

DEAN: Anything I might add to what I've testified about President Nixon's role in Watergate would involve others whose cases have not yet been resolved, so I'll have to demur on that one, too.

PLAYBOY: What do you think would have happened if—prior to your testimony before the Ervin committee—Nixon had decided to tell the whole truth himself?

DEAN: If the President had stepped forward and told the American people what he'd done—and vowed to spend

the rest of his term making it up to them—I think a lot of people would have said, "Well, he's an awful man, but we might as well let him finish it out."

PLAYBOY: Don't you think that a full, truthful confession would have subjected him to impeachment or criminal prosecution?

DEAN: I doubt it. Nobody would have pursued it. That was partially my thinking when I finally—on March 21, 1973—went to see him about what was happening to the Presidency. It also came up in a later conversation when I told him I'd been to the Prosecutor. It was a difficult conversation for both of us. Before I left the office, I felt I had to raise my fear that he might be impeached. But I brought it up almost indirectly when I told him that I thought that if things were handled right, he would *not* be impeached. The President said to me, with an almost nervous laugh and a smile, "Well, I assure you, John, it will be handled right and that won't happen." His decision, unfortunately, was to try to avoid impeachment by keeping the lid *on*, not by taking it off. The compulsion to hide—the conviction that telling the truth would mean curtains—was too strong.

PLAYBOY: You said later that during that conversation with the President about impeachment, you had had a creepy feeling that he was speaking for the record—that he might be recording your conversation. Were you shocked when you found out that he *had* been taping you—and everyone else?

DEAN: I was *elated*. After all, the White House and Nixon's supporters had been calling me a liar. I remember, after my appearance at the hearings, I was taking a few weeks off to relax at the beach in Florida and Dash called and said, "John, I'd like you to come back to Washington." And I said, "Is it important, Sam? I'd really like to spend another few days down here before I get back in the thick of things." And he said, "It's very important!" So I flew back and met with Sam and one of the people on his staff at my house. Dash opened with some pleasantries and a few general questions and I'm thinking, Why in the world does he want me back here for this? But finally he said to me, "John, you said you believed one of your conversations with the President was taped. Do you think *all* of his Oval Office and Executive Office Building conversations could have been taped?" And I said, "Gee, I don't know, but I'll tell you how you could find out. First I would go to Albert Redman, the head of the White House Communications Agency, and subpoena him. He's a military man and I think he'd be truthful, because he wants to protect his career and wouldn't want to be caught lying. If he doesn't know about it, the other people who would know about it would be the men in the Secret Service." And Sam started smiling.

"Well, we have hard information that all of the conversations *were* taped." And I said, "That's fantastic!" Sam told me later he was testing me to see what my reaction would be. Well, I was delighted, because it wouldn't be my word against everybody else's anymore; there existed a documentary record that would corroborate everything I'd said in testimony.

PLAYBOY: Were you indignant at being called a liar by White House representatives and accused of masterminding the Watergate conspiracy?

DEAN: No, flattered. They tried to make it look as if I had been virtually running the White House, if not the country. I didn't know I had been so powerful. For a while there, I couldn't believe they were talking about the same job I had as their legal gofer. But I don't think I was chosen to take the fall as much as I was selected as the enemy: I'd betrayed them. Last summer I picked up a book called *President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile*, by Dr. Eli S. Chesen. It's a fascinating book that's gotten almost no play, but I hope it does now, because Chesen has really captured the personality of Richard Nixon as I saw it. I hope that as more tapes become available, the doctor does a revised edition of his book, because it's fantastic and could be of use to historians and students of the Nixon Presidency. He explains from a psychiatrist's standpoint why Nixon always has to have an enemy. He's always had one, and this time it was my turn; I'm sure I still am his enemy.

PLAYBOY: Does that psychological need for an enemy account for what Jeb Stuart Magruder called the atmosphere of paranoia that pervaded the Nixon White House?

DEAN: Well, it's tougher to account for than it is to describe, but I think you're right. Because had not the President wanted it that way, it wouldn't have been that way.

PLAYBOY: And he hired the kind of guys who'd give him the service he wanted.

DEAN: That's right.

PLAYBOY: As one who was hired by him, did you feel that you could give that kind of service?

DEAN: I don't know. Until the very end, I didn't work directly for the President. I worked for Haldeman and Ehrlichman. But I think when and if the key tapes are released, it will become clear that I tried to be his counsel and tell him when things were wrong; I did my best to give him good advice. I often found that the only way to persuade the President—or Haldeman and Ehrlichman—was to say, not that something was improper but that it was *impractical*. But however I put it, when he didn't take my advice, I didn't—at that time—have the courage to tell him, "Mr. President, you're dead wrong." Rather, I told him, "If you want me to go out and sell Wheaties,

I'll sell Wheaties." There are countless occasions in the tape transcripts when I've surprised myself at how much I tried to please the President, at my almost unconscious impulse to say things I knew he wanted to hear.

PLAYBOY: Is that what you were trying to do when, in response to Nixon's remarks about "getting" the people on the White House enemies list, you said, "What an exciting prospect?"

DEAN: I'm afraid so. I was trying to ingratiate myself with him. It's as simple as that. I'm not proud of it, but I guess I'm not the first guy who ever tried to curry favor with the boss.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you have a good deal to do with the preparation of the enemies list?

DEAN: Let me give you a self-serving answer, which happens to be true. It wasn't my idea to draw up the list. What happened was that Haldeman asked me to prepare a memo on the subject. I did, but my name wasn't even on it; I was embarrassed by having to prepare it. I deliberately noted in it that I had to go to others to learn about how you screw your enemies. Nor were the names on the list prepared by my office; they came from Chuck Colson's office. I also passed the responsibility for executing the project from myself to some project coordinator, whoever he might be. I felt I had fulfilled my assignment by writing the memo and passing it on to whoever was more interested in doing that sort of thing than I was.

PLAYBOY: Do you know whose idea it was to draw up the list?

DEAN: No, I don't know for certain. But I think that when the rest of the tapes are made public, you'll have a pretty good idea.

PLAYBOY: Do you know *why* the list was drawn up, what criteria were used in deciding who should appear on it?

DEAN: Well, I never could figure out why Joe Namath was on the list. Maybe he was a member of the wrong ball club. At any rate, the list had him on the wrong ball club.

PLAYBOY: Were he and the others on the list considered dangerous to the Administration?

DEAN: Maybe not in Namath's case, unless he had refused to follow a recommended Presidential football play. But I can perceive the mentality that would feel that way about some of the others, because I saw it around me all the time.

PLAYBOY: The vindictiveness, you mean?

DEAN: A bit of vindictiveness. You know: We've got the power now and, by golly, we'll show them that we can let them have it when they try to fool with us.

PLAYBOY: That sounds like Colson.

DEAN: I think some of the tapes will show that even Chuck Colson's attitudes didn't always originate with Chuck Colson.

PLAYBOY: But from above?

DEAN: Above.

PLAYBOY: Can you tell us who?

DEAN: Not now, I'm afraid.

PLAYBOY: The majority of those on the enemies list ranged politically from liberal to radical. Did you share the President's intolerance of people on the left and of the center in general?

DEAN: No, I didn't. Let me give you an example of how Presidential policy in this area was made and how I'd deal with it sometimes. During the second Inauguration, a man charged out from the crowd along Pennsylvania Avenue toward the President's car. No one saw this on television; hardly anyone knew it had happened. He broke through the police line, but that was as far as he got; almost immediately, two Secret Service agents had him down on his back with their feet on him. But that night I received a call from the head of the Presidential Secret Service protection detail saying that the President wanted that man prosecuted. The guy had already been turned over to the Metropolitan Police and interrogated and he turned out to be a taxi driver from New York with antiwar sentiments who was just trying to make his point by breaking through the lines. He had no other motive; he wasn't armed; there was no threat to the President.

But the next day, at the Sunday-morning reception following the church service after the Inauguration, the President paused in the reception line and said to me very adamantly, "John, I want that man who broke the lines prosecuted. I want you to take care of that." And I got follow-up calls from Haldeman and Larry Higby demanding to know what I was doing about that guy. Well, I had looked into it and tried to find out what there was to it in terms of a potential offense, but all he'd done was break some regulatory statute by going through police lines during a parade. Anyway, the Secret Service and the Metropolitan Police prepared a detailed report, and it was sent over to the district attorney's office, where the deputy D.A. talked to Henry Petersen about it. I told Petersen that the President wanted this man prosecuted. He said OK, studied the case, called me back and said, "John, we'd really have to stretch it to prosecute this guy." I said, "Henry, that's all I need." So I just wrote on top of the file, "Petersen says no prosecution possible" and filed it. Thank God I never heard anything more about it. They just forgot about it.

PLAYBOY: Many of those at the top of the enemies list were members of the press, which the Administration wanted the public to believe was out to crucify the President. Did you believe it really was?

DEAN: No, not really. I think the press's attitude was and is fine. But I don't think

he thought the press was out to get him, either. The tapes show that. Remember where he said, "Well, we're carrying a lot of the press this time"? Particularly during the campaign, there was a lot of editorial support for the President at both ends of the political spectrum. I think there's been a bit of overplay about Presidential paranoia toward the press, particularly by the press itself. There's no doubt that there *were* elements in the press that the White House staff was convinced were out to discredit the President. These they defined as "enemies," and said, "We'll get them later." A perfect example is *The Washington Post*. But it isn't true that Nixon was paranoid about the whole press. If anything, his Administration tried to manipulate the press to its own will more than any previous Administration, particularly with regard to Watergate. There was a large part of the staff at the White House that handled relations with the press. During Watergate, I became very involved in seeing what was happening with the press, how it was misled, how leaks were being put out and controlled. The Nixon White House had a superb news-management apparatus.

PLAYBOY: But it didn't stop with news management. When the Administration used FCC license-renewal powers as a club to subdue local TV stations, and when Ehrlichman hinted to CBS News head Richard Salant, over an outwardly friendly breakfast, that he should send White House correspondent Dan Rather back to Texas, that was intimidation, not news management.

DEAN: No question about it. But I think we've found that the press is independent and strong enough to have survived that experience and perhaps benefited from it.

PLAYBOY: In the daily news summaries that were prepared for the President by the White House staff, was there any slanting or censorship of what was published about the Administration?

DEAN: No, I'd say that the news summaries were, by and large, fairly accurate representations of the wire-service stories and magazine reports.

PLAYBOY: They didn't play to Nixon's prejudices?

DEAN: In some instances they did. For example, every now and then, they would attach a batch of political cartoons to the news summaries. But I never saw them attach any of the hostile ones.

PLAYBOY: Then Nixon had something of a false sense of security with regard to public opinion about the Administration?

DEAN: Well, he got that mostly from his staff. But he did read *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. In many instances, he'd talk about things he'd read in the dailies.

PLAYBOY: Was he as isolated as we've

been led to believe?

DEAN: Yes, very isolated. One thing that impressed me early on was his refusal to deal directly with most members of his staff. Everything was so channeled through Haldeman and Ehrlichman and Kissinger that he seldom got the flavor of what the rest of his staff was thinking. An option paper might be sent in, but that wasn't the same as having the man who wrote it argue that option in front of you and being able to ask him questions about it.

PLAYBOY: Were any of those options that were offered to Nixon the kind that could have been expected to be unpopular with him, or were they narrowed to those his senior staff thought he could deal with?

DEAN: I think the options ran the gamut.

PLAYBOY: It's been reported in the press that Nixon could deal with any kind of criticism as long as it was in written form, but that he simply couldn't tolerate any kind of face-to-face confrontation. Is that true?

DEAN: Well, let me give you a brief example from the morning he asked for my resignation. I refused to give it to him without the assurance that Haldeman and Ehrlichman were also going to resign. I was very surprised by his reaction to my refusal. He was flustered. He was nervous. And he caved in. He had obviously been misleading me when he said that he already had Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's resignations in hand, because he then said, "Why don't you go draft a letter that they can use for a model, too?" When I read the transcript of the conversation that followed, at the point when Haldeman and Ehrlichman walked in after I had left, I was amazed to read that he told them how tough he'd been with me. He'd been *anything* but tough. I thought to myself: This is the man who deals with foreign leaders?

PLAYBOY: What do you think held Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman together? Was it friendship, the loyalty of a shared past or just a shared paranoia—or merely a pragmatic understanding that they'd have to stand together or go down together?

DEAN: Someday, when all the trials are over, I'll give you the answers to all these questions. And I'd add one more name to the list you mentioned—that of John Mitchell—and tell you, for example, how he felt about being Attorney General. I'll also tell you exactly how Haldeman became Chief of Staff; how he *made* Ehrlichman; and why Nixon needed them all.

PLAYBOY: That's all you're going to tell us now?

DEAN: Sorry.

PLAYBOY: Haldeman, Chapin, Ziegler and others on the White House staff made up what some have termed the West Coast Mafia. Were you aware that

these people were known, as long ago as their days in USC campus politics, for the kind of "dirty tricks" later made infamous by Watergate and its related scandals?

DEAN: No, not really. I'd had dealings with many of the White House staff while I was working at the Department of Justice. But I learned about past "dirty trickery"—if that's what it can be called—only after joining the staff. I already knew about their clubbiness, of course, but I wasn't invited to *join* the club for some time after I became a member of the staff, and I did very little socializing with them even after I was a member of the club, so to speak. I socialized with them just enough to know that their idea of a good time was talking shop together, *playing* at playing tennis and talking more shop. That wasn't my idea of a good time.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever really become part of the inner club at the White House?

DEAN: I certainly was on the way to becoming one of the President's boys after I began having dealings directly with him. I was getting reports back from Haldeman and Ehrlichman that the President liked me very much and, from Colson, that he was very fond of me. The President even tried to get me to talk at Cabinet meetings, because he liked my delivery. Nixon was very image-conscious and apparently liked the image I portrayed as one of his men. I also discovered, in reading the transcripts of some of the discussions at which I wasn't present, that Haldeman talked about my being a lot tougher than they thought I was going to be. Well, that's the kind of talk that makes Dean one of the boys, too. In the tape of a subsequent conversation, on the other hand, Haldeman said something like, "Dean's a good detail man; he remembers all those little things everybody else forgets about. But he's the kind of guy who ought to work in the background; we don't want him up front."

PLAYBOY: Perhaps they thought they couldn't quite trust you, that you weren't quite flexible—or pragmatic—enough to suit them.

DEAN: Well, I didn't think as they did on a lot of things. For example, Haldeman used to tease me for preferring my Porsche 911T to a White House chauffeured car. And other members of the staff seemed almost jealous of me when I was single. As one of them put it, "Kissinger gets all the press as the White House bachelor swinger, while Dean gets all the action—but no headlines." Despite all these incompatibilities, however, Haldeman and I worked well together and became good friends.

PLAYBOY: Maybe that was *his* pragmatism. Was Haldeman really as cold and as tough as everybody seemed to think he was?

DEAN: Well, he never turned on me, but

be a lawyer. I enjoyed the part of the job that involved being a lawyer, but I didn't enjoy the rest of it.

PLAYBOY: You say you didn't enjoy your job. That seems a rather bland reaction to the kind of things you had to do. Don't you find the Administration's extralegal activities, its attempts to preempt the FBI and the CIA, disturbing—even Orwellian?

DEAN: Yes, I do, especially in retrospect. As a matter of fact, last summer I reread *1984* and after several years at the Nixon White House, it made fascinating, almost frightening reading.

PLAYBOY: Do you see parallels?

DEAN: The whole thing, including doublethink. If something was said yesterday, you could put out a new statement today that would completely change it.

PLAYBOY: You mean "render it inoperative."

DEAN: Exactly. I'm surprised Orwell didn't use that phrase. Anyway, when you picked up the newspaper in the morning and read the new cover story that had replaced yesterday's cover story, you began to believe that today's news was the *truth*. This process created an atmosphere of unreality in the White House that prevailed to the very end.

PLAYBOY: You mean those who made up the stories were believing their own lies?

DEAN: That's right. If you said it often enough, it would become true. When the press learned of the wire taps on newsmen and White House staffers, for example, and flat denials failed, it was claimed that this was a national-security matter. I'm sure many people believed that the taps *were* for national security; they weren't. That was concocted as a justification after the fact. But when they said it, you understand, they really *believed* it.

PLAYBOY: National security is a defense Nixon used to justify almost every offense committed in the course of Watergate. How would you define it?

DEAN: National security is like that vague term Executive privilege. Both terms have been abused; both concepts have been damaged; they've been used as shields for secrecy. To me, national security deals with clear and present dangers, posed by a foreign nation or an internal saboteur, that threaten the sovereignty of our country or the very foundations and workings of our Government.

PLAYBOY: Would that include Daniel Ellsberg's theft of the Pentagon papers? How did Nixon feel privately about Ellsberg?

DEAN: Well, since the case relating to the break-in at the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist is on appeal, I've got to demur in that area. I wasn't called as a witness in that one. In fact, when the judge who

tried the case heard that I wasn't on the witness list, he said, "Thank God Dean isn't testifying here, too." Although the prosecutors told me they might call me as a rebuttal witness, they didn't have to.

PLAYBOY: Why did you choose to break the news of the burglary of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office?

DEAN: I was dealing with the prosecutors at the time and I realized that if I didn't tell them what I knew about it, I could be charged with another offense—obstruction of justice—when I was trying to tell them what offenses I'd *already* been involved in. I also knew that my knowledge could affect the outcome of Ellsberg's trial. I didn't know, you see, if the break-in was justified by threats to national security, but I didn't think so. Everybody at the White House was telling me it was, but I always told them I didn't think that would sell.

PLAYBOY: Was Nixon being a conscious hypocrite when he used national security as grounds to justify the break-in?

DEAN: I think he wanted to believe that, because it would justify the break-in. As I said before the Senate committee, I just don't think he realized the implications of some of the things that went on. Now, that doesn't mean I think he was unaware that these things were wrong, but because he was the President, he felt he could make them *right*—merely because he said so. The power of the President is so enormous that I think when Nixon sought to justify something, it was for him, as for all believers, not only the truth but the *law*.

PLAYBOY: Sounds like the doctrine of papal infallibility.

DEAN: For some it nearly was. To the believers, Presidential statements rang ex cathedra. Others went along less out of faith than out of fear—fear that they'd lose their jobs. Whenever people left their White House jobs or were eased out, breaking the cord was a wrenching experience for them. They missed the White House mess, where they could eat in luxury. They missed the limousines, the helicopters, the White House pass and stationery, the telephones with 400 buttons on them, the rides in 707s that hold only 34 people—and most of all the status that goes with saying, "I work at the White House."

PLAYBOY: Is it healthy for Presidential advisors to wield so much power? Shouldn't such appointments be subject to Congressional approval?

DEAN: I wouldn't advocate that. I think each President, as each Senator who picks his administrative aide and each judge who picks his law clerk, should be able to pick the men he can work with. The responsibility should fall on him to pick the right people. But I would like to see a more dominant Cabinet. The Nixon Cabinet, for the most part, was totally

controllable by the White House staff. A strong Cabinet member should be able to tell a White House staffer, "Buzz off" or "Have the President call me himself and I'll tell him why I'm doing what I am."

PLAYBOY: But if staff appointments aren't even subject to cursory Congressional investigation, where's the accountability?

DEAN: The accountability must rest with the President. We can't overreact to a Watergate to the point of hampering the operations of any President we're unhappy with. The advise-and-consent process wouldn't solve this for the White House staff.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the proposal we began to hear, toward the end, that the Nixon Administration should be dissolved for lack of confidence, as in the British parliamentary system?

DEAN: That's not a viable option. I've had an awful lot of mail from people on just this issue, and that's made me think a lot about it. I think our system is very workable as is. It may be that we were simply lucky this time that the system worked so well. Indeed, the system has been tested by Watergate in a way it's never been tested before. All branches of Government responded with incredible performance—the Congress with its hearings and its impeachment inquiry, and the courts in handling the evidence-gathering and criminal-justice aspects of it.

PLAYBOY: Those are magnanimous sentiments coming from a man who's been sentenced to prison for one to four years. Considering the fact that the term you have to serve is heavier than those meted out to all others who admitted complicity much later than you, do you think your sentence was fair?

DEAN: Well, frankly, the severity of my sentence surprised me. I had thought that when Magruder was sentenced to ten months to four years, that that sort of represented the perimeter of what I might expect myself, because Magruder was involved not only in the cover-up but in the planning of Watergate and in countless perjury situations; whereas—though there's no doubt about my participation in the cover-up—I had never perjured myself, I had *not* been involved in the actual planning and the record is pretty clear that, in my own way, I had tried to stop it from occurring. So I was surprised when my sentence exceeded Jeb's.

But I have to consider the fact that Judge Sirica has been accused of being pro-prosecution, and if he in any way coddled the Government's star witness with a light sentence, there could be another motion to disqualify him. Also, the prosecutors' case would be stronger, since they obviously had done no favors for their key witness. So sometimes you might have to pay an extra price for tell-

ing the truth. But, being a lawyer, I realize that the system is capable of self-correction and by the time this interview comes out, we'll know if I'm right in hoping that it may do so in my case. The judge has 120 days from the day he sentences to modify it in any way he may see fit. I can only pray he'll reconsider in the light of my effort to right the wrongs of Watergate and reduce what I cannot but feel is a very harsh punishment.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about having to serve time in prison for carrying out the orders of a man who has now been totally exonerated for issuing them?

DEAN: Well, I don't believe that Richard Nixon has been or ever shall be totally exonerated. While it's true that he's been pardoned for any Federal crimes he may have committed as President, he can't escape the judgment of history. Nor can President Ford's pardon free him from the guilt of his own conscience. Only the truth can set him free, and Nixon has rejected his freedom. Speaking for myself, I would rather admit that I have done wrong, accept my punishment—despite the inequity it represents—and long for the day when I'll leave prison a totally free man.

PLAYBOY: How do you think history *shall* judge Nixon? And how do you think he wants to be remembered?

DEAN: Let me answer the second part first. During my time at the White House, I was very aware of the fact that elaborate plans were being devised, through the Nixon Foundation, for the President's future Presidential library. It was going to be a vehicle by which Richard Nixon could continue to influence American politics and make history as long as he was so inclined.

PLAYBOY: How?

DEAN: By means of everything from television specials to control over rights to the books written by those who worked for him. Now, of course, as a result of Watergate, it's going to be very difficult to raise the money for that operation. As to how history will judge Nixon, that depends upon what the future holds for the former President. I think the decision not to prosecute him will influence his role in history. There's also the question of whether or not there will be further revelations involving him. I believe there will be.

PLAYBOY: Big ones?

DEAN: Big ones.

PLAYBOY: Things you know about but don't want to talk about?

DEAN: Things I *can't* talk about now. Maybe I should say it's "national security"! Not really. I just think there are going to be further revelations and that these, too, will influence history. Another factor will be the former President's decision on whether or not finally to come around and say, "Yes, I did these things

and here's what they were. Some of them were bad. But I also did a lot of good things." I think history will judge him much more kindly if he does that. Otherwise, how can you know whether it was really Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger who decided to go to China? If he doesn't make a clean breast of Watergate, there will always be a question about his credibility on everything else ever accomplished during his Administration.

PLAYBOY: Because of Watergate, almost a dozen men are serving or have served time in prison. But some people question whether justice is being served even behind bars. The prison in which you're going to be confined, for example, has been called a country club among detention facilities. Do you think it's fair that Barker, Martinez and several of the other Watergate burglars served time in harsher quarters?

DEAN: Well, there are different types of prisons for different types of offenders. I mean, should you put someone who's committed burglary or murder in a cell alongside a bank embezzler?

PLAYBOY: What bothers you most about going to prison?

DEAN: I think the toughest thing is the punishment it's going to force on my wife and the situation it places her in. We're very close and interdependent, and this is going to be a tremendous shock for her, and a heavy burden, given the fact that her mother is very ill.

PLAYBOY: Won't imprisonment be a shock and a burden for you, too?

DEAN: Of course. I take some comfort, though, in the fact that Mo's going to be very busy writing a book while I'm away. During the period when I was so consumed with preparing my testimony and with my court and Congressional appearances, I suggested that she keep a diary of her reactions to what was going on. She has a fine, perceptive mind, and she's a good writer. I've read some of what she's written so far—she started keeping her diary in April of '73, and it runs up to the present—and it's such a fresh perspective on the whole thing that I asked Hays Gorey, a writer friend, to help her turn it into a book. I think it will provide a side to the story of Watergate that no one else could ever provide. Plus, you know, how our own relationship underwent strain at times—especially during that treadmill period of cover-up, cover-up, cover-up—and how the experience we've gone through since then has brought us closer together. I believe she has something to share with other women, and with men—something that may help others in time of crisis.

PLAYBOY: How do you plan to spend your time in prison?

DEAN: I'll be very busy for the first several months preparing for my testimony as a witness in upcoming trials.

PLAYBOY: And after they're over?

DEAN: Well, I'm not given to idleness. I plan to do a lot of studying and a lot of reading for pleasure.

PLAYBOY: Including *All the President's Men*?

DEAN: I said reading for *pleasure*.

PLAYBOY: Are you going to do any writing?

DEAN: If I do, it won't be on my own Watergate book. That will have to come later.

PLAYBOY: After you're out?

DEAN: Long after. There are many other things I want to do with myself.

PLAYBOY: You don't think you'll have trouble finding a job?

DEAN: On the contrary. A great many people seem to want me for jobs that run the gamut. Some I'm very suspicious of; they're obviously for publicity purposes. But others are legitimate offers that are very interesting. I'm really not worried about that. I don't know what I'll do when I'm out of prison, but I do know I'll never again allow myself to get into the rat-race type of life I once led. Life is too short and I intend to stop and smell the flowers. I'm also going to spend a lot of time with my wife, who is my best friend. And with my other friends. And traveling.

And I have a few pet projects. I intend to start on at least one of them while I'm still in prison. For example, I think that the Japanese-Americans who were incarcerated during World War Two got from the American Government some of the worst treatment that has ever been administered to any group of people. I've collected material on this for years, and I've talked with many nisei who suffered at the hands of our Government, which never really made any amends. I think it owes something in restitution to the Japanese-Americans. And when I come out, I'm going to make it one of my top priorities to see that they get it. Thanks to my years of experience in Government—the invaluable opportunity I've had to find out from the inside how it works—I know there's a great deal I can do, and I know exactly how to go about it. So, even though it ended badly—and rather early—I hope my career in Government hasn't been a total write-off.

PLAYBOY: At the end of his testimony, White House aide Gordon Strachan told the Ervin committee that he would advise young people to stay away from Government service. Would you agree with that?

DEAN: No. In fact, I would give the opposite advice. I'd like to encourage as many young people as possible to get into Government. It needs their energy and their idealism, and it would respond; politics doesn't have to be a dirty word. The more young people—those who were the *most* indignant about the abuses of Watergate—get involved, the

less likely it is that a Watergate could ever happen again. In fact, *because* of Watergate, I don't think it ever will.

PLAYBOY: It's been observed that Wash-

ington scandals seem to run in 50-year cycles. hope so.

DEAN: Well, I think we've got at least 100 years to wait this time. At least I

